



State of Oregon
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

UMPQUA COMMUNITY COLLEGE AUDITORIUM DEDICATION

Roseburg, Oregon
Sunday, October 1, 1972 -- 2 p.m.

REMARKS BY GOVERNOR TOM MCCALL

Three weeks ago my physician advised me that if I would follow his advice to the letter, my illness would relent. I followed the doctor's orders assiduously because I wanted to get well.

And I especially wanted to be able to meet this long-standing commitment to visit what I am assured is the most beautiful community college campus in Oregon.

Beyond the atmosphere, of course, there must be all else that goes into a quality education. Sometimes we wonder when we will get it all perfectly together, and when education will no longer have to endure the annual bath of fire that a budget election has become.

I think the plight of educators is well known. Returning from California by airliner 10 days ago, I still didn't feel terribly well and I was suffering some discomfort. I'm afraid that a mournful sigh escaped my lips.

The man across the aisle leaned over and said, "Gee, I didn't know you were a teacher."

While there truly are tribulations involved in being a teacher, there also are significant personal rewards. And I think it would be exceptionally satisfactory to seek these rewards at a community college.

The degree of flexibility attained by the community colleges is perhaps the most exciting educational development in Oregon in the last decade. A community college can adapt itself promptly and expertly in meeting the demands for a particular technical or social skill.

Portland Community College may not find a need for a course in log truck operation, but Umpqua Community College has found the need and met it. Associated with this you developed a course in heavy equipment repair. And then, continuing to respect the forest products orientation of Douglas County, you put together an indoor-outdoor forestry laboratory to train technicians and recreation specialists.

Some of Douglas County's smaller high schools simply can't afford to create and finance all the programs that would be of value to their students, and so Umpqua Community College can at least partly fill this void.

These kinds of responses to community needs are at the root of the strength of the community college system. Community colleges are leading the way in knocking down barriers that prevent our citizens from obtaining a realistic post-high school education. Community colleges put students in contact with real life situations and the real world of work.

I think this amply demonstrates that the decisions of the last decade were correct. And it doesn't end here -- we anticipate that in the next 10 years community college enrollment statewide will more than double.

Oregon's community colleges sprang up from local initiative and local support because citizens wanted to create meaningful educational institutions for their children and themselves. I am proud of you and pleased with you for the personal and financial commitment you have made to quality education through the Umpqua Community College.

And if I can, I'll back up these words with a continued high level of state financial support for the community colleges, and improve it when we are able. But I can't promise you anything because of the very real possibility that there won't be enough money available next year to open any public school in the state.

My trepidation springs from the appearance on the November ballot of a constitutional amendment to prohibit the use of property taxes to finance the operating costs of the public schools. This proposal provides no replacement revenue and if it is adopted would drop a \$770-million financial problem in the lap of the 1973 Legislature.

Two-thirds of the property taxes paid for schools come from business and industry, so we know who would save the most if Measure Number 9 succeeds next month. What we don't know is who would be called upon to replace the missing revenue.

It doesn't appear to be well known, but Measure Number 9 would strike at the community colleges as well as the elementary and secondary schools. If replacement revenue can't be found for the lower grades it can't be found for Umpqua Community College, either.

I want no one to misconstrue my comments as criticism of the well-meaning people who drafted the proposed constitutional amendment, for I can well understand the aggravation of homeowners and farmers with property taxes. I am fully acquainted with the motivation of anyone who would sign the property tax initiative.

Homeowners are telling us that they have been wrung dry by the property tax; they are saying, quite correctly, that property taxes bear no relationship to the ability to pay.

I hope you are aware of the school finance and property tax relief proposals I have advanced. Later this week I will unveil the final draft of this plan. It will respond in a positive way to well-founded objections. I intend to seek the approval of the people for this plan to reform taxation for schools, but I also must depend upon the people to take it to the candidates for the Legislature. I hope you will give the final proposal your careful attention, and ask your legislative candidates whether they will support it.

In offering this proposal now I am urging at the same time that we be given one more chance to achieve tax reform in the interest of educational finance. And then if we fail in our final opportunity, I could hardly see any other recourse than to join those who would have the shotgun at our heads.

But I believe we're going to confound the experts who say that dramatic tax reform can't be achieved. I believe this because we have too much at stake, including the very life of this institution.

The people of Douglas County asked that this auditorium be built, impressive new evidence of the response of the college to public interest and demand. Loss of property tax revenue for operating costs of this school would be in exact opposition to your dedication to its existence.

This auditorium expands educational opportunity certainly, but it is designed as a community center as well. The Eugene Symphony and the Portland Junior Symphony will appear here.

Artists brought here by the Roseburg Community Concert Association will fill this air with music to be thrilled by. High school and junior high school students will stand here to prove their musical talents.

Especially worthy of note is that this building was not a costly exercise in community responsibility.

No one had to order the stone from Italy -- it came from Snowbird Mountain near Glide. And in fact the building is constructed almost entirely of native materials.

This building -- this campus -- does honor to the environment. And you have done me an honor by allowing me to dedicate the Umpqua Community College Auditorium to your exceptionally noble purpose.

###